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## How Cold Was It? January 8

The first year of the Korean War was a war of maneuver --- some have even used the term “see-saw.” North Korean forces attacked South Korea in June 1950, and occupied all but a small corner of the southern part of the peninsula. A coalition of United Nations forces led by the United States intervened, and pushed the North Koreans back into a small corner of the north. In October and November, units from the People’s Republic of China intervened in the war, and pushed the US/UN forces back down the peninsula; the Chinese captured the capital city of Seoul. The US/UN forces not only battled an enemy that outnumbered them, but endured the cold, snow, and ice of a North Asian winter.



*The retreat from North Korea*

Detachments of Army Security Agency (ASA) personnel accompanied the US/UN forces northward to provide tactical SIGINT support to the fighting forces. These ASA detachments joined in the retreat from superior Chinese forces, and eventually re-established SIGINT operations in the southern city of Taegu.

A captain who led one of the ASA detachments remembered the experience. During the movement northward, all supplies except those needed immediately were combat loaded and ready to roll. The captain remembered, “When the organization was alerted for a move... normally we were able to be on the road two hours after orders were received.”

The ASA detachments had continual trouble with equipment, both for their daily lives and for operations. When regular military equipment wore out, there were few supply dumps in Korea to get replacement items. As for the mission, the men

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constantly had trouble with their radios, which were delicate and which took a “terrific beating” on the “exceedingly rough roads of Korea.”



*The operations building in Taegu, in warmer weather*

ASA personnel lived and worked in tents in the winter weather. The captain remembered that the tents were covered with ice “both outside and inside,” and it was difficult “to keep stoves burning when the fuel oil was too cold to flow.” Operations were difficult, too, in this weather --- “it was so cold you typed with one hand while warming the other.”

Despite the adversities, ASA personnel knew that lives depended on what they did, and continued to produce quality SIGINT on the enemy forces.

Source: several articles in 1950 and 1951 issues of *ASA Review*, a now-defunct bimonthly magazine for ASA personnel worldwide. The specific quotations are from Captain Harold S. Mosher, “Recollections of Korea,” *ASA Review*, November-December 1951.

508 caption: photo 1: a jeep, followed by a line of trucks, on an icy road, coming around a mountain curve; photo 2: a square tent in front of a Korean-style building.

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